continue with the existing nine and half per cent rate of interest on Employees Provident Fund;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR (SHRI MUNI LALL): (a) to (c) The Central Board of Trustees, Employees' Provident Fund in its meeting held on 22nd January, 2002 considered the issue of declaration of rate of interest in respect of EPF subscribers for the year 2002-03 and has recommended continuation of 9.5% rate of interest pending further consideration of the matter.

The CBT (EPF) in its special meeting held on 12th Arpil, 2002 has desired that the rate of interest of 9.5% recommended on interim basis in its last meeting should be continued. Recommendation of CBT (EPF) is under Government's consideration.

National policy on Occupational Safety and Health at Work Places

5346. SHRI RAMACHANDRA KHUNTIA: Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have decided to formulate a National Policy on Occupational Safety and Health at Work Places;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Government have prepared a programme to consult concerned trade unions/national centres to have their views before formulating the policy;

(d) if so, the details thereof;

(e) if not, the reasons therefore; and

(f) by when a legislation in the matter is likely to be brought before the Parliament?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR (SHRI MUNI LALL): (a) to (f) A Working Group on Occupational Safety and Health was constituted by the Planning Commission under the Chairmanship of Secretary (Labour) for the Tenth Five Year Plan to review the existing set

up for occupational safety and health in the work place, to assess weaknesses of the existing set up and suggest ways to improve if and also to suggest ways to improve occupational safety standards in the large segments of work force not included so far, etc.

The working group in its report recommended that a coherent National Policy on Occupational Safety and Health of Workers employed in all sectors of the economy should be prepared through tripartite consulatation. The working group has recommended improvement of Occupational Safety and Health in the Mines, Factories, Ports and Docks in the organized sector and to provide awareness and training to workers in the Agriculture construction, Beedi and Cigar manufacturing shops and establishments, home work, eating places and waste management sectors in the unorganized sector during the plan period. Formulation of National Policy on occupational Safety and Health is a gigantic task requiring formulation by a group of experts and thereafter discussion in a tripartite forum. The State Governments and Departments/Ministries of the Central Government would also be consulted to finalise the National Policy. Therefore, it would not be possible to give a definite time schedule at this juncture.

Counter service for EPFO beneficiaries

5347. SHRI RAMACHANDRA KHUNTIA: Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have decided to set up "Any time any where" counter service for Employees Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) beneficiaries;

(b) if so, the details thereof alongwith the number of such counters to be set up in Orissa and location thereof; and

(c) by when these counters are likely to start working?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR (SHRI MUNI LALL): (a) to (c) A modernisation programme namely "Reinventing Employees Provident Fund—India" has been launched by the Employees Provident Fund Organisation. It involves reengineering of the existing work process, re-tooling of accounting system and setting up of an information technology/computer enable system through networking of all offices of Employees Provident Fund Organisation. It envisages